



Fact Sheet

South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control • www.scdhec.gov

Shigella

What is <i>shigellosis</i>?	This is a highly infectious disease caused by the bacteria <i>Shigella</i>
What are the symptoms?	Most people develop diarrhea, stomach cramps and fever a day or two after they are exposed to the bacteria. For most people, the symptoms will go away in about a week, although the person will remain infectious for about 3 weeks. Since many different types of germs can cause diarrhea, a laboratory test ordered by your doctor is the only sure way to determine if you, your child or anyone else has <i>Shigella</i> .
How is <i>Shigella</i> treated?	<i>Shigellosis</i> can usually be treated with antibiotics. Be sure to take the full prescription your doctor prescribes in order to kill the bacteria and shorten the illness. Do not use antidiarrheal agents like <u>Imodium</u> or <u>Lomotil</u> as they could make the illness worse.
How do people catch this disease?	The bacteria is passed from an infected person, usually through the oral-fecal route. This means that most infections are passed from stools or soiled fingers of one person to the mouth of another. That is why in a large number of cases the infection is passed in day cares or where diapers are changed. It is also likely to appear in family and playmates of toddlers who are not fully toilet trained. The disease can also be spread by contaminated food and by swimming water if someone with <i>shigellosis</i> swims in it.
How can we prevent this illness?	The best way to stop the spread of shigella is by frequent and careful hand washing. We should all wash our hands before eating, after using the bathroom or after changing diapers or helping small children use the bathroom. It is also best if children with diarrhea do not enter swimming pools or come in contact with other children until they have been without diarrhea for at least 2 days. Be sure to dispose of dirty diapers in a closed lid container. All diaper changing areas should be wiped with a disinfectant after each change. And people with a diarrheal illness should not prepare food for others.

SOUTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONTROL

Region 7

Serving Berkeley, Charleston and Dorchester Counties

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